

Research Culture Task & Finish Group

Final Report and Recommendations

March 2022

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Executive Summary

This is the final report arising from the work undertaken by the University's Research Culture Task & Finish Group.

In recent years, a series of external reports have focussed on the need to improve the culture of the research environment. These reports, (including those produced by the Wellcome Trust, the Russell Group of UK Universities and the Royal Society) identified a number of concerns about our current research culture, and the consequences of this on the quality of research outputs, the health of researchers and also staff retention across the sector.

In March 2020, the University's Research Policy Committee (RPC) approved the establishment of a Task & Finish group focused on Research Culture at the University of Aberdeen. The purpose of the group was to:

- Identify policies and procedures currently in place which benefit the research culture at the University; and
- Identify where gaps exist and make proposals for how these can be addressed.

The membership of the group is detailed in Appendix A.

To fulfil this remit, the Task & Finish group formed three work-streams:

- **Communications:** to communicate plans across the University;
- **Survey:** to plan a survey of research staff to understand the current issues and what needs to be addressed;
- **Engagement:** to provide a range of opportunities to staff to engage in this work.

A webpage was created to explain the work of the group and to promote external resources on this topic. This was supplemented by a series of presentations to various Schools, University Committees, and other groups of staff and PGRs, which helped to promote wider staff and PGR engagement with this work. A dedicated email account was also provided as a further feedback mechanism.

It was originally intended that a survey would be undertaken of the University's research community as part of this work. However, following a recommendation from the UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN), a collaboration was agreed with the University of Edinburgh to develop a small survey questionnaire that could be used by all UKRN members. It is anticipated that this should be available in mid-2022, and it is recommended that consideration be given to running such a survey amongst researchers in the University.

To foster engagement and discussion on research culture at the University, a series of Café Culture sessions (adapted from the Wellcome Trust's research culture toolkit) were organised. These were organised as small group, cross-discipline discussions of staff at similar career stages and included sessions for PGRs and for Professional Services staff who are involved in research support. Further information on these sessions is provided in Appendix B.

The engagement of staff and postgraduate research (PGR) students with this work has been invaluable in enabling the group to identify a comprehensive and wide-ranging series of recommendations to help develop a positive research culture within the University.

The recommendations made in this report are on the key themes of:

- Developing research careers
- Improving the experience of working in research
- Supporting inclusive and respectful environments
- Changing how we do research

These are proposed with the aim of making the University of Aberdeen a place that researchers want to come to do their research, to develop their skills and to contribute to the ongoing success of the University.

Summary of Recommendations

| <i>Developing research careers (Section 4.1.2)</i> | |
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| Recommendation 1 | Reward good research culture practices in our university processes for recruitment and promotions: specifically, we should seek to measure, assess and reward a wider range of activities which contribute to a positive research culture and environment. We should consider how this may be best achieved and look at examples which are being introduced, such as the narrative CV being piloted by UKRI based on the Royal Society “Resumé for Researchers”. |
| Recommendation 2 | Support development and planning for diverse career paths: specifically, as we develop a formal action plan in relation to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (hereafter referred to as “The Concordat”), we should ensure that we: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ manage career expectations of staff and research students, around the time of induction. ○ raise awareness of career opportunities beyond academia, working with the Careers Service, and develop a positive narrative about mobility between sectors. We should consider the possibility of facilitating the provision of mentors for PhDs and postgraduate research students outside academia and work to make available more internships in such external settings. ○ make career progression opportunities open to all through flexible working options, monitoring their take-up and assessing the barriers preventing people applying for these. ○ ask early career researchers to report their ten days of professional development (as per the Concordat) in their annual review. ○ provide opportunities for researchers to contribute to the wider work of the University and take this contribution into account in their workload planning. ○ adopt recruitment and promotion policies to assess a wide range of activities, and specifically, for outputs, not to use the Impact Factor of a journal as a proxy for research quality. |
| Recommendation 3 | Consider ways to provide more long-term support to early career researchers and tailored support for mid-career researchers: specifically considering options to limit the use of very short-term contracts and to consider use of an institutional fellowship scheme to give longer term support to some early career researchers; providing training relevant to mid-career researchers (such as PI and leadership training) and support tailored to individual ambition. |
| <i>Improving the experience of working in research (Section 4.2.2)</i> | |
| Recommendation 4 | Develop support networks: we should consider establishing networks to support postgraduate research students (PGRs) and researchers. The aim would be to help them build professional networks, prevent isolation, and support wellbeing through creating a sense of community and belonging. This is a particular challenge as many people move to a hybrid working pattern. We should consider how we can make available informal physical |

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| | spaces for networking and communication. Where these exist or are set up, we should evaluate how effective they are at achieving their aims. |
| Recommendation 5 | Improve support for staff returning to the workplace: we should consider the introduction of a 'Returners Policy' for e.g. staff on maternity leave, career breaks, etc. to support them in resuming their previous career path and associated responsibilities. |
| Recommendation 6 | Promote, recognise and reward excellent leadership and people management: building on the positive data from the 2020 staff survey, this can include training for line managers and research supervisors (including refresher courses); recognising and rewarding excellent leadership and people management through our research awards and hiring and promotion processes. This could include the provision of 360° appraisals for those who wished to evidence their wider contribution to research activities, although an affordable way to introduce them "at scale" is required. |
| Recommendation 7 | Diversify supervision and mentorship provision: it is university policy that PhD students should have two supervisors and an advisor, although it seems that this does not happen across all parts of the university – we need to monitor and report the implementation of this policy. Postdoctoral researchers could be given the opportunity of being second supervisors where this is appropriate. |
| Recommendation 8 | Encourage interdisciplinarity: building upon the success of events such as the "Conversations On" series, to identify other opportunities to bring researchers together across the University and thus encourage interdisciplinary research. Ideas include re- instating inaugural lectures aimed at a pan-University audience and possibly TED-style talks. |
| Recommendation 9 | Recognise workload issues: consideration should be given to the provision of a "safe space" for researchers to raise issues of excessive workload/unrealistic timelines in relation to their supervisor or line manager. Academic staff should be encouraged to involve their area of research into their teaching/curriculum, where this is possible. In terms of planning workload between teaching and research, it is recommended that academic staff should have meaningful input when constructing the expected timeframe for marking, and this should be routinely re-evaluated. |
| Support inclusive and respectful environments (Section 4.3.2) | |
| Recommendation 10 | Recognise and reward: reward and celebrate contributions to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, such as within hiring and promotion criteria, application processes for internal funding and through our staff research awards. |
| Recommendation 11 | Review procedures related to career progression: review our procedures to ensure that career progression is open to persons from all backgrounds, including those with caring responsibilities. |
| Recommendation 12 | Review support networks: review our support networks for postgraduate researchers and research staff to ensure that they are providing effective support across members of the research community. This will include supervisory and mentorship arrangements. |
| Changing how we do research (Section 4.4.2) | |
| Recommendation 13 | Build an infrastructure that will enable open and equitable research publishing and use responsible metrics to measure the impact of open research: A number of tools can be combined to provide an infrastructure to improve transparency and openness in research. These include Contributor roles Taxonomy (CRediT), FAIR data (i.e. Findability, Accessibility, |

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| | Interoperability, and Reuse), Open Researcher IDs (ORCID), Creative Commons licenses. There are also wider metrics (alternative, or “alt metrics”) that can be used to measure the impact of research beyond academia. Innovation in the form of open peer review and new open research publishing platforms also offer potential. As the open research landscape continues to evolve, we recommend raising awareness of and providing training on using these resources and that such activities should be considered in hiring and promotion procedures alongside traditional measures such as citations. This will demonstrate our commitment to DORA; one of its main principles is that research is evaluated on its own merit and that the Journal Impact Factor (a journal-level citation metric) is not used to inform recruitment and promotion decisions. |
| Recommendation 14 | Raise awareness of reporting systems: to make staff more aware of reporting systems (including for new staff and research students at time of induction) in relation to research misconduct. Further, to provide events about the reporting systems and how they work for staff and research students to provide clarity and give confidence in using them. |

The above recommendations primarily relate to actions which the University can take to promote a positive research culture, although it is recognised that to effect change, other bodies such as funders and publishers of research have an important role also.

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| <i>Other Stakeholders (Section 5)</i> | |
| Recommendation 15 | Hold events for academic staff who sit on funder panels, advisory groups and journal editorial boards to highlight the issues of research culture, what these stakeholders can contribute to improving the research environment and how academics may be able to exert influence. |

In terms of making these recommendations, it is important that this represents an ongoing commitment to improve research culture and so doing, we must monitor our progress.

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| <i>Monitoring our Progress at Enhancing Research Culture (Section 6)</i> | |
| Recommendation 16 | The Dean for Interdisciplinary Research and Research Impact will submit an annual report to the Research Policy Committee in relation to progress, both in terms of recommendations in this report but also in terms of new initiatives. |
| Recommendation 17 | A small group will work with the Dean in driving forward the proposals contained in this report and in monitoring progress. |
| Recommendation 18 | A group of research culture champions is introduced to support this work on research culture and build on the network of researchers currently supporting and promoting open research practices. |
| Recommendation 19 | Consider use of the survey questionnaire on research culture, currently being developed under the auspices of UKRN, (expected to be available for distribution in mid-2022) to obtain further feedback from a wider group of researchers. |

Finally, the above include recommendations about how we recognise and reward activities in relation to research and specifically promoting a research culture. We have therefore made specific recommendations around assessment for promotion.

| <i>Recommendations around assessment for promotion (Appendix C)</i> | |
|--|---|
| Recommendation 20 | A wider set of research activities is recognised in the promotion procedures and specifically a decreased importance given to volume of research published. |
| Recommendation 21 | Consideration be given to ways the University can reward staff for achievements, in addition to research funding and high-quality outputs, giving specific consideration to aspects of the “narrative CV”, and ways in which such contributions could be relevant to all disciplines, and evidenced. |
| Recommendation 22 | Promotion pathways for postdoctoral researchers be revised, ensuring appropriate job titles, mentorship, and development opportunities are available to them. |

1. Background

The Royal Society defines research culture as *“encompass[ing] the behaviours, values, expectations, attitudes and the norms of research communities. It influences **who** is doing research, **what** research is done and **how** it is communicated. Research culture impacts on...integrity, diversity, career paths, reward and recognition, open science and the ethos of collaboration.”*

Recent reports from the UK government¹, the Russell Group of UK Universities², and the Royal Society³ have all focussed on improving culture in research settings, a priority emphasised in interviews by the incoming Director of UK Research and innovation (UKRI)⁴. The Wellcome Trust recently published *What Researchers Think About the Culture They Work In*⁵. They have subsequently undertaken “town hall” meetings to discuss the content of the report with the academic community and to gather ideas for how research culture could be improved. The report highlighted concerns about some aspects of the current research environment and the consequences of such for the quality of research, the health of researchers and retaining talent in the sector. Proposed areas for action include better support for early-career researchers, training to strengthen managing and mentoring, identifying and deterring poor practice as well as policies to promote good practice.

At the University of Aberdeen, we have been proactive in activities related to the above. For example, the Research Policy Committee approved revisions to our Research Governance Procedures (including revised procedures in relation to research integrity) and we were in the first group of universities to join the UK Reproducibility Network⁶ (UKRN) which aims to foster open and transparent research procedures. Our activities in this area have involved both students and staff, with, for example, a new MSc module in open and reproducible science being introduced in academic year 2020/21. We have recently signed the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), which commits us to fair research assessment and responsible use of journal metrics, emphasising the content of research papers over the identity of the journals in which they are published. In 2020, the University launched its [2040 strategy](#), setting out our commitments over the next 20 years to become more inclusive, international and sustainable and to increase interdisciplinarity. Underpinning these commitments, and integral to achieving our 2040 goals, is an inclusive and respectful research culture.

Although these individual activities are positive, to address the issues of the research culture in which they sit, a Research Culture Task & Finish group was formed to consider a greater range of

¹ R&D people and culture strategy: [Research and development \(R&D\) people and culture strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

² *Realising our Potential: Backing Talent and Strengthening UK Research Culture and Environment*: [Realising Our Potential: Backing Talent and Strengthening UK Research Culture and Environment \(russellgroup.ac.uk\)](https://www.russellgroup.ac.uk)

³ *Research culture: changing expectations, report on landmark conference*: [Research Culture: Changing expectations conference | Royal Society](#)

⁴ *(UK's powerful funding chief is on a mission to change scientific culture: 'Make research fun again': UK's powerful funding chief is on a mission to change scientific culture (nature.com))*

⁵ *What Researchers Think About the Culture They Work In* ([what-researchers-think-about-the-culture-they-work-in.pdf \(wellcome.org\)](#))

⁶ UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN): <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/psychology/research/ukrn/>

measures involving activities of staff and students across the University. The University already had many policies in place to support a positive research culture but there was a need to consider them all together, to identify where any gaps existed and if identified, to propose what needed to be done.

The aim was to identify what we were doing successfully to create a positive research culture in which researchers could flourish and undertake high-quality research, but also to identify where and how we could do more.

2. Task & Finish Group Remit

The remit of the Research Culture analysis was to identify policies and procedures currently in place which benefit the research culture at the University; to identify where gaps exist; and make proposals for how these can be addressed.

The Task & Finish group formed three work-streams:

- **Communications:** Communicating our plans across the University (including developing a website to bring together information relevant to research culture)
- **Survey:** Planning a survey of research staff to understand what are the issues that people undertaking research at the University of Aberdeen see as relevant and would wish us to address
- **Engagement:** Providing wider opportunities for engagement (e.g. through individual input and focus group events)

The Task & Finish group was convened in March 2020 with the intention to report within nine months, but due to issues around the pandemic and subsequent decisions made to ease the workload of staff, our work was paused. Working to a revised timescale, the report of the committee was scheduled to be delivered by the end of 2021. Membership is detailed in Appendix A.

3. Workstreams

3.1. Communications

The group created a [webpage](#) to explain the purpose of the group, provide examples of initiatives already undertaken by the University to enhance our research culture, and to promote some external resources on this topic e.g. weblinks to work undertaken by the Wellcome Trust and UKRI.

In late 2020, group members conducted a series of presentations to various Schools, University committees, and other groups of staff and postgraduate research (PGR) students to raise awareness of the work of the group and to promote wider staff and PGR engagement with its aims.

A dedicated email account (researchculture@abdn.ac.uk) was created as a further feedback mechanism for the University community. This was routinely monitored so that any queries or messages relating to research culture within the University were addressed in a timely manner.

It is intended that this website be regularly updated, even after the work of the group is complete, to keep the community up to date with ongoing activities in this area – particularly as the group recommendations are actioned leading to new initiatives, policies and procedures.

3.2. Survey

The Wellcome Trust survey, mentioned above, produced important findings. However, the response rate from the UK-based institutes was very low (around 0.4%). The low response rate was probably partly due to the comprehensive nature of the survey - it included more than 120 questions and took approximately 25 minutes to complete. In mid-2020, the University of Edinburgh used the same survey, with some minor modifications, for their research-active academic staff and post-doctoral researchers. The response rate from their survey, which included the opportunity to win different levels of reward (£50 or £1000), based on a random draw, was also low (around 1.4%). Hence, there is a need to develop a survey which takes less time to complete and would be completed by a larger proportion of research staff. It should, however, capture all the important domains of information.

We are currently collaborating with the University of Edinburgh team to analyse the data from both the Wellcome Trust and University of Edinburgh surveys and develop a small survey questionnaire based on both quantitative data analysis and subjective appraisal. We anticipate the reduced questionnaire would be available around mid-2022. Both the Universities of Aberdeen and Edinburgh are members of the UKRN and there has been interest from members across the network to use a short survey with similar questions and therefore with the opportunity to benchmark results. Although this work has taken longer than anticipated, we feel it is worthwhile to design an instrument whose development has involved a network of institutions and therefore has greater “buy-in” and likely greater use.

3.3. Engagement

In order to foster engagement and discussion surrounding research culture at the University of Aberdeen, a series of focus groups were conducted, but organised so that people at a similar career stage were grouped together. These sessions were adapted from the Café Culture in the Wellcome Trust’s toolkit⁷, used in their 2020 *What Researchers Think About the Culture they work in*⁸ initiative. In our adaptation researchers and professional services staff from across schools and departments were invited to come together in groups of three to eight and discuss the strengths, challenges, and future directions of the research culture at the University of Aberdeen.

⁷ Wellcome Trust Toolkit (<https://wellcome.org/what-we-do/our-work/research-culture/hosting-your-cafe-culture-discussion>)

⁸ *What Researchers Think About the Culture They Work In* ([what-researchers-think-about-the-culture-they-work-in.pdf](https://wellcome.org/what-researchers-think-about-the-culture-they-work-in.pdf) (wellcome.org))

These sessions were designed to be flexible and collaborative, and thus were able to provide a platform for informal communication and brainstorming between participants. The integration of professionals from across schools/departments proved to be particularly beneficial in allowing for cross-discipline discussion, allowing participants to engage with hurdles on a wider institutional level, as opposed to being contained within individual school/department policy. 11 sessions, involving a total of 45 participants, generated rich qualitative data which was used in the construction of the “priority areas for action” and recommendations in this report, demonstrating the distinctive significance of cross-discipline engagement. A more detailed description of the sessions is provided in Appendix B.

4. Priority Areas for Action

We outline the priority areas for action identified, taking account of the information presented in the Wellcome Trust report, “issues to consider for universities” from the Russell Group Research Culture toolkit, the input from our focus groups, information from the annual [University of Aberdeen Staff Survey](#) conducted in 2020 and the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 [Equality & Diversity Impact Assessment \(EDIA\)](#). The sections relate to research careers; the experiencing of working in research; inclusive and respectful environments; and how we do research. To feed into a planned review of promotion processes during 2021-22 we have brought together specific recommendations relevant to this promotion review in Appendix C.

4.1. Research careers

A strong theme which emerges in both the Russell Group and Wellcome Trust reports, as well as our focus groups, relate to issues around research career pathways. Much of the work around supporting careers as part of an inclusive research culture is covered by the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers⁹ (hereafter referred to as “The Concordat”), to which the University of Aberdeen is a signatory.

Career stability and transitions: Both the UKRI and the Wellcome Trust reports conclude that staff and research students should be prepared for a range of career options, not just academia; however, participants in our focus groups told us that those wishing to pursue a career outside university feel unsupported. For those remaining in academia, the lack of long-term contractual job security, often related to external grant funding, is an important issue: specifically early career researchers highlighted the system of rolling short-term contracts (often in different locations) and the pressure to win grant funding. Respondents told us that this is particularly challenging in the arts and humanities where there are fewer grant opportunities. Mid-career researchers also emphasised this as an issue – grant opportunities are often most suitable either for senior researchers, or specific schemes target early career researchers, but rarely those in mid-career. Those in teaching posts feel that there is little opportunity for the scholarship activities expected from them. Our senior academic focus group encouraged us to think whether we may be able to provide more and longer-term support for early career researchers – such as through an institutional fellowship scheme. The

⁹ [The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers - September 2019 — Vitae Website](#)

- *raise awareness of career opportunities beyond academia, working with the Careers Service, and develop a positive narrative about mobility between sectors. We should consider the possibility of facilitating the provision of mentors for PhDs and postgraduate research students outside academia and work to make available more internships in such external settings.*
 - *make career progression opportunities open to all through flexible working options, monitoring their take-up and assessing the barriers preventing people applying for these.*
 - *ask early career researchers to report their ten days of professional development (as per the Concordat) in their annual review.*
 - *provide opportunities for researchers to contribute to the wider work of the University and take this contribution into account in their workload planning.*
 - *adopt recruitment and promotion policies to assess a wide range of activities, and specifically, for outputs, not to use the Impact Factor of a journal as a proxy for research quality.*
3. **Consider ways to provide more long-term support to early career researchers and tailored support for mid-career researchers:** *specifically considering options to limit the use of very short-term contracts and to consider use of an institutional fellowship scheme to give longer term support to some early career researchers; providing training relevant to mid-career researchers (such as PI and leadership training) and support tailored to individual ambition.*

4.2. The experience of working in research

As part of “What Researchers Think About the Culture They Work In” published by the Wellcome Trust in 2020, the Wellcome Trust asked researchers what words they would use to describe their current experience (reproduced below as Figure 1).

Figure 1: Words that researchers would use to describe research culture

When asked to describe the sentiment associated with their word, more than half (55%) were negative and the overall sentiment was that the environment was getting worse. Descriptions such as “stressful” and “pressured” were common, and these have important links to wellbeing. Respondents perceived that there were many “top-down” initiatives around policy, funding and research assessment, or more specifically institutions responses to such initiatives, which often (negatively) influenced research culture even if not having the specific intention to do so. Many believed their workplace put overwhelming expectations on them, which impacted the conduct of research, and that more value was attached to metrics than research quality, Collaboration was widely seen as an important aspect of good research culture in the Wellcome Trust work. Environments which encouraged and supported collaboration were generally perceived to have better working cultures than those which didn’t.

Collaboration: We repeated the above exercise as part of our focus group series and invited individuals to choose words to describe their local research culture. Our wordcloud is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Words that researchers used to describe the research culture at the University of Aberdeen



The word “collaborative” featured strongly (as well as many other positive words including “inspiring” and “supportive”). There was, however, also mention of “siloes”, “disorganised”, and “challenging”. A key issue that was raised in the local culture series was around communication. There was a perception of a lack of “shared vision” for research across a school (or department or organisational unit) and a perception about a lack of communication between different disciplines. Our senior academic focus group noted that we had lost the tradition of inaugural lectures of newly appointed professorial staff attended by researchers across the University. This was reflected also in the 2020 Staff Survey where only 52-60% of research and academic research staff considered there to be good co-operation, and 51-65% good communication between Schools/different parts of the University. Some researchers felt isolated, without a sense of what other researchers were doing and this was felt particularly for those working on cross-disciplinary research. They thought it important to develop more fora for early career researchers to network, to learn from and support each other. They indicated that this could be facilitated by a networking space – not one which would require the formality of booking but where researchers could meet informally – although it was appreciated that the layout of campus buildings did not always lend itself well to this. In the staff survey only 48%-55% of academic staff on a research/research & teaching track thought that our physical spaces facilitated networking although this was slightly higher (66-67%) when considering virtual spaces. Participants in our focus groups asked that consideration be given to opportunities for sharing of information across schools at all levels.

Workload: The issue of workload was raised in several of our focus groups, for example that some posts regularly required working more than the contracted number of hours, and this was an issue highlighted also by the 2020 staff survey. This particularly related to academics on the teaching and research track. Only a small proportion of such staff reported NOT having to work extra hours to keep up with their workload (9%). While this may partly have been related to demands during the COVID19 pandemic, when asked about demands pre-COVID19 only 53% reported that they had not been struggling to cope. The proportion of academics on the teaching and research track who

reported a good work-life balance (46%) was much lower than academics on the research track, or other researchers (72-79%)

The issue was raised in focus groups of timescales allocated to work tasks by line managers/supervisors not being realistic, and specifically for post graduate researchers who often felt that there was no-one to turn to if they felt they were being overworked by their supervisor. In the staff survey 86% and 87% of Academic (Research staff) and Research assistants/fellows, respectively, reported being given realistic deadlines for their work, however this dropped to 68% for those academics on the teaching and research track.

In making recommendations about improving the experience of working in research (and in other areas of research culture) the Task & Finish group is aware that many will result in an increased workload for individuals. This may be through taking on new roles, undertaking additional activities, or doing things in a different way. This must be recognised in terms of workload planning so that as people take on more commitments, they then must do less of others or longer timescales for such other activities may need to be recognised.

4.2.1. What are some examples of what we are already doing in relation to improving the experience of working in research?

- The University has established a workload review group and it has taken some initial actions. It has recommended limits for times suitable for arranging meetings. It has also nominated Friday (all day) and a lunch hour each day when it is recommended to avoid internal meetings. Staff are now recommended not to send email communications outside normal working hours. It has developed a [Workload Reduction Toolkit](#) to help teams make decisions about workload.
- In the 2020 staff survey over 90% of academic staff on a research (with or without teaching) track or other researchers responded positively about their line manager respecting and valuing them, being approachable, and supportive in relation to a personal crisis. Over 80% responded that their team is managed effectively.
- Respondents felt that the University COVID response was very positive and normalised the discussion of stress and mental health, which should continue. Examples where leaders advertised taking leave and not continuing to be seen to work were particularly appreciated. Initiatives to protect lunch time and to reduce meetings on Fridays were seen as welcome and effective.

4.2.2. In what areas should we focus on doing more to improve the experience of working in research?

Recommendations:

4. **Develop support networks:** *We should consider establishing networks to support postgraduate research students (PGRs) and researchers. The aim would be to help them build professional networks, prevent isolation, and support wellbeing through creating a sense of community and belonging. This is a particular challenge as many people move to a hybrid working pattern. We should consider how we can make available informal physical spaces for networking and communication. Where these exist or are set up, we should evaluate how effective they are at achieving their aims.*
5. **Improve support for staff returning to the workplace:** *we should consider the introduction of a 'Returners Policy' for e.g. staff on maternity leave, career breaks, etc to support them in resuming their previous career path and associated responsibilities.*
6. **Promote, recognise and reward excellent leadership and people management:** *building on the positive data from the 2020 staff survey, this can include training for line managers and research supervisors (including refresher courses); recognising and rewarding excellent leadership and people management through our research awards and hiring and promotion processes. This could include the provision of 360° appraisals for those who wished to evidence their wider contribution to research activities, although an affordable way to introduce them "at scale" is required.*
7. **Diversify supervision and mentorship provision:** *it is university policy that PhD students should have two supervisors and an advisor, although it seems that this does not happen across all parts of the university – we need to monitor and report the implementation of this policy. Postdoctoral researchers could be given the opportunity of being second supervisors where this is appropriate.*
8. **Encourage interdisciplinarity:** *building upon the success of events such as the "Conversations On" series, to identify other opportunities to bring researchers together across the University and thus encourage interdisciplinary research. Ideas include re-instating inaugural lectures aimed at a pan-University audience and possibly TED-style talks.*
9. **Recognise workload issues:** *consideration should be given to the provision of a "safe space" for researchers to raise issues of excessive workload/unrealistic timelines in relation to their supervisor or line manager. Academic staff should be encouraged to involve their area of research into their teaching/curriculum, where this is possible. In terms of planning workload between teaching and research, it is recommended that academic staff should have meaningful input when constructing the expected timeframe for marking, and this should be routinely re-evaluated.*

4.3. Inclusive and respectful environments

The Wellcome Trust report authors noted that bullying and harassment came up frequently through their interviews but was experienced differently by different people. Many felt bullying and harassment to be culturally systemic and a third thought that leaders often “turned a blind eye” to such behaviour. This type of behaviour was most commonly reported to be from a supervisor or manager although it was acknowledged that there was a grey area between a management style that appropriately challenged staff to perform well and one that was bullying. In our 2020 Staff Survey between 94-99% of academic research staff or other researchers reported that they were not currently being bullied at work while between 90-95% reported that they had not felt discriminated against at work. Across the University 83% of respondents felt that if they had to make a complaint it would be taken seriously, and this did not vary significantly across staff groups. While these figures are generally positive, it emphasises that a small minority are still experiencing bullying and harassment. In discussions within our focus groups, it was felt important that there was zero tolerance of bullying and harassment because otherwise this led to the perception that it was “just the way it was” – and it was perceived that environments which tolerate bullying are also ones in which other unacceptable behaviours can be tolerated. There was discussion around people from certain backgrounds being dissuaded from entering/or continuing with research because of discrimination experienced and that women, as well as being more likely to take career breaks were also more likely to take on supportive roles. It was of note that in our focus groups the vast majority of persons coming forward to participate were female. It was suggested that this could reflect more of a willingness to participate in such activities, be a reflection that there are issues of particular relevance to women with respect to research culture, or that males simply were more ready to accept that “this was the way it was”.

4.3.1. What are some examples of what we are already doing to support inclusive and respectful environments?

- The University is fully committed to equality for all its staff and students, and has made commitments around wellbeing, access, collaboration, accreditation and pay which are detailed on our [website](#). In the 2020 Staff Survey between 96-100% of respondents in academic research and other research staff groups were aware of these policies and 89-94% believed that the University was committed to equality of opportunity for all its staff.
- Inclusivity is one of the key strategic themes of Aberdeen 2040 and this has informed the work of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Committee¹² in setting strategic goals
- The University has a suite of online training modules related to equality, diversity and inclusivity and two of them are mandatory for staff to complete: “Inclusion Essentials” and “Tackling Race Bias”.

¹² [Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee | StaffNet | The University of Aberdeen \(abdn.ac.uk\)](#)

4.3.2. In what areas should we focus on doing more to support inclusive and respectful environments?

Recommendations:

10. **Recognise and reward:** *Reward and celebrate contributions to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, such as within hiring and promotion criteria, application processes for internal funding and through our staff research awards.*
11. **Review procedures related to career progression:** *Review our procedures to ensure that career progression is open to persons from all backgrounds, including those with caring responsibilities.*
12. **Review support networks:** *Review our support networks for postgraduate researchers and research staff to ensure that they are providing effective support across members of the research community. This will include supervisory and mentorship arrangements.*

4.4. How we do research

It is also important to consider *how* we undertake research – an excellent research culture is one that values research that has been done well and is of high quality. There has been recognition of the need to address scientific processes to improve the validity and efficiency of research. Indeed, the UK Parliament Science and Technology Committee has specifically considered this area in terms of research integrity and reproducibility, and Dr Jess Butler a member of this group gave evidence as a witness in December 2021¹³. There has traditionally been greater focus and reward for “new” findings rather than endeavours to produce very robust findings. The UKRN¹⁴, aims to investigate the factors that contribute to robust research, promoting training activities and disseminating best practice. The “open research” movement has developed to promote good practice. It involves activities such as promoting pre-registration of studies and registered reports, sharing of data and code, and providing open access to research. It is relevant across all areas of research.

The University does not currently ask questions relevant to how we do research in the staff survey, and this was not commonly raised within our focus group discussions. We feel that we need to highlight this area to promote future discussions amongst researchers. However, discussion in the focus groups, around misconduct in the research environment highlighted several consistent themes: lack of awareness of how to report misconduct; reporting methods perceived to be “disorganised, non-transparent, inaccessible and untrustworthy”. This was noted by both staff and post-graduate research students. Specifically annual reviews or supervisor meetings did not feel like a “safe space” to raise issues around misconduct as they may involve (or have close links to) persons who were part of any misconduct allegation.

¹³ [Science and Technology Committee holds evidence session on research - Committees - UK Parliament](#)

¹⁴ [UK Reproducibility Network \(ukrn.org\)](#)

Evidence from our REF submission shows how far disadvantaged groups in terms of gender and ethnicity fall behind in terms of numbers of outputs, and it has also been shown that they are less likely to be published in 'top' journals. Our work should ensure inclusivity in research publishing strategies, and the application of our commitment to DORA should be guided by an acknowledgement that this is an issue we must address.

4.4.1. What are some examples of what we are already doing in relation to changing how we do research?

- The University of Aberdeen was one of the first universities to join UKRN and has established a local network (currently lead, Dr Jess Butler). The aim of UKRN is to assist researchers, university administrators, public and private research funders and academic journals to work in partnership to raise the standard and quality of research. UKRN initiatives include the development of common training across career stages, aligning promotion and recruitment criteria to support open and reproducible research practices, and sharing best practice. As part of this network, the University of Aberdeen is a partner in an award from Research England Development Fund for a five-year programme to accelerate the uptake of high-quality open research practices.
- We have established a scholarly communications service to support all researchers in making their research openly available, in line with funder policies and in ways that allow them to demonstrate and measure the wider impact and benefits of their work.
- We have mandated undertaking a Research Integrity course for all persons involved in research at the University (either as researchers or in roles supporting research).
- DORA is a worldwide, cross-disciplinary initiative which recognises the need to improve the ways in which scholarly research outputs are evaluated and seeks to encourage key stakeholders in the research publications process to develop and promote best practice. The University of Aberdeen became a signatory in July 2020. Work is ongoing to implement DORA commitments into our policies and practices.
- Promoting good conduct in research: We are a signatory to the UUK's *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*¹⁵ (which was revised in 2019), and our Research Governance Framework is designed to uphold the five commitments therein, to ensure that the highest standards of research rigour and integrity are maintained. The University has a comprehensive set of policies around Research Governance which includes procedures around unacceptable research conduct. These have been recently revised ([Unacceptable Research Conduct](#)) to bring them in to line with current standards and specifically the recommendations of the Science and Technology Committee around Research Integrity¹⁶

¹⁵ [Updated FINAL-the-concordat-to-support-research-integrity.pdf \(universitiesuk.ac.uk\)](#)

¹⁶ [Research integrity - Science and Technology Committee - House of Commons \(parliament.uk\)](#)

4.4.2. In what areas should we focus on doing more to change how we do research?

Recommendations:

- 13. Build an infrastructure that will enable open and equitable research publishing and use responsible metrics to measure the impact of open research:** *Several tools can be combined to provide an infrastructure to improve transparency and openness in research. These include Contributor roles Taxonomy (CRediT)¹⁷, FAIR Data¹⁸ (i.e. Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reuse), Open Researcher IDs (ORCID)¹⁹, Creative Commons licenses. There are also wider metrics (alternative, or “alt metrics”) that can be used to measure the impact of research beyond academia. Innovation in the form of open peer review and new open research publishing platforms also offer potential. As the open research landscape continues to evolve, we recommend raising awareness of and providing training on using these resources and that such activities should be considered in hiring and promotion procedures alongside traditional measures such as citations. This will demonstrate our commitment to DORA; one of its main principles is that research is evaluated on its own merit and that the Journal Impact Factor (a journal-level citation metric) is not used to inform recruitment and promotion decisions.*
- 14. Raise awareness of reporting systems:** *To make staff more aware of reporting systems (including for new staff and research students at time of induction) in relation to research misconduct. Further, to provide events about the reporting systems and how they work for staff and research students to provide clarity and give confidence in using them.*

5. Other Stakeholders

While the priorities identified above focus on what the University of Aberdeen can do to address issues around research culture, there are other important organisations which can impact on the issues under consideration. Both the Russell Group report and our focus groups have highlighted the important role that funders and publishers can play in this area. Academics have an important role in encouraging change in this area as University staff play an important role on funder advisory groups and funding panels. So, for example, in terms of planning the timing of funding call notices and deadlines for application they can encourage panels to consult with the academic community around timing.

Recommendation:

- 15. Hold events for academic staff who sit on funder panels, advisory groups and journal editorial boards to highlight the issues of research culture, what these stakeholders can contribute to improving the research environment and how academics may be able to exert influence.**

¹⁷ [CRediT – Contributor Roles Taxonomy \(niso.org\)](https://niso.org/)

¹⁸ [FAIR Principles - GO FAIR \(go-fair.org\)](https://go-fair.org/)

¹⁹ [ORCID](https://orcid.org/)

6. Monitoring our progress at enhancing research culture

The work of this Task & Finish group has involved taking stock of current activities at the University of Aberdeen in relation to Research Culture, focussing on what we currently do and where we could focus on doing more to support a positive research culture. Research Culture affects almost every aspect of the research we do and thus while the establishment of the Task & Finish group has provided a timely focus on this area – the work of scrutinising what we do and how we continue to improve needs to be embraced by individuals and effected through many aspects of our organisational structure.

While the Research Policy Committee will have oversight of research culture there is an important role for several committees in taking forward the recommendations of the committee: this includes the Concordat Steering Committee and the Postdoctoral Research Committee in relation to how we support careers, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee in terms of who does research and the environments in which they work, and the role of the library team in open research practices. More informal structures in the University also have a role, such as the local node of the UKRN. Many of our recommendations relate to HR activities, including what we value when we recruit and reward researchers and in relation to the latter, we have provided separate recommendations to feed into the forthcoming promotions review (Appendix C).

This is a constantly moving field and it is important that we keep pace with changes and indeed continue to influence change. Overview of progress in taking forward the recommendations of the Task & Finish group will be the responsibility of the Dean for Interdisciplinary Research and Research Impact within the revised Dean structure approved by SMT in September 2021.

Recommendations:

16. ***The Dean for Interdisciplinary Research and Research Impact will submit an annual report to the Research Policy Committee in relation to progress, both in terms of recommendations in this report but also in terms of new initiatives.***
17. ***A small group will work with the Dean in driving forward the proposals and monitoring progress.***
18. ***A group of research culture champions is introduced to support this work on research culture and build on the network of researchers currently supporting open research practices.***
19. ***Consider use of the survey questionnaire on research culture, currently being developed under the auspices of UKRN, (expected to be available for distribution in mid-2022) to obtain further feedback from a wider group of researchers.***

[End of Report text]

Appendix A: Membership of the Research Culture Task & Finish group

Professor Gary Macfarlane (Chair), Dean for Interdisciplinary Research & Impact

Mrs Dawn Foster (Clerk), Research Policy & Governance Officer, Research & Innovation

Mrs Joanna Adams, Scholarly Communications Officer, University Library

Mr Simon Bains, University Librarian

Professor Michael Brown, Dean for Cultural Strategy & Research Governance (*demitted office end of June 2021*)

Dr Jess Butler, Research Fellow, Centre for Health Data Science

Dr Caitlin Cottrill, Senior Lecturer, School of Engineering (*resigned from the group at the end of June 2021*)

Professor Mirela Delibegovic, Dean for Industrial Engagement in Research & Knowledge Transfer

Dr Heidi Gardner, Research Fellow, Health Services Research Unit

Dr Ines Graca, Lecturer, School of Engineering

Professor Tamas Gyorfi, Director of Research, School of Law

Dr Claire Hawes, Researcher Development Advisor, Graduate School

Mr Jack Hellberg, Student Intern (*joined the group in June 2021*)

Dr Ashish Malik, Lecturer, School of Biological Sciences

Mr Gavin McFarlane, Senior Mechanical Technician (*joined the group in May 2021*)

Dr Mintu Nath, Senior Lecturer, Applied Health Sciences (*joined the group in April 2021*)

Professor Graeme Nixon, Dean of Postgraduate Research

Dr Liz Rattray, Director of Research & Innovation

Ms Ana Rozman, PhD student, School of Psychology

Dr Rachel Shanks, Senior Lecturer, School of Education

Mrs Fiona Smith, Head of HR Partners, Human Resources

Appendix B: Wellcome Café Culture Sessions Executive Summary

Wellcome Café Culture Sessions Executive Summary

‘Research culture encompasses the behaviours, values, expectations, attitudes, and norms of our research communities. It influences researchers’ career paths and determines the way that research is conducted and communicated’ ~The

Royal Society

Authors: Jack Hellberg and Dr Claire Hawes

From June-November 2021, a total of **11** Café Culture sessions, collectively reaching **45** participants, were conducted to evaluate the research culture at the University of Aberdeen. These sessions were adapted from the Café Culture kit²⁰ developed by the Wellcome Trust, which was designed to prompt general and focused discussions about research culture. This summary of the University of Aberdeen’s sessions catalogues the themes that emerged **across groups**. Specific points under these general themes are collected from individual, group, and inter-group discussion.

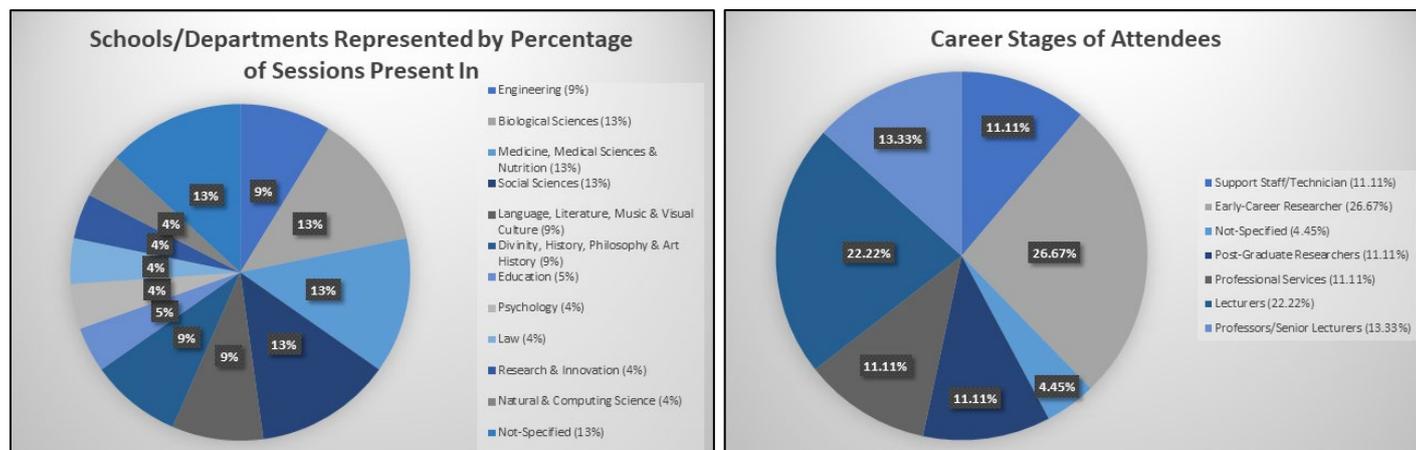


(Above) Participants were asked to describe the current and then ideal research culture at the University of Aberdeen. The size of each word indicates its number of uses.

²⁰ <https://wellcome.org/what-we-do/our-work/research-culture/hosting-your-cafe-culture-discussion>

Demographics

- 45 total participants with an average of 4 participants per session.



(Above) Charts showing the percentage of sessions with participants from a certain school/department (Left) and the percentage of participants belonging to a particular career stage/group (Right). The most represented school/departments were the schools of **Biological Sciences**, **MMSN** (Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition), and **Social Sciences**. The most represented career stage was **early-career researcher**.

Key Issues

Workload (8/11 Sessions)

- Required work for some posts regularly exceeds 40 hours a week
- There is a conflict between expectations of work/life balance and expectations of 'high-quality research' with not enough resources.
- Academic staff are not able to transparently collaborate and compare on their workloads.
- Due to high workload, some work must be done outside of work hours, yet this work is not adequately rewarded.
- The time allocated to complete work is often not realistic and does not consider all facets of the work involved.
- Lecturers do not feel like they are given appropriate time/consideration for their research.
- School-level staffing and teaching decisions are sometimes broken and contradictory.
- Bureaucratic work is taxing and reiterative when understaffed
- The time it should take to complete new work is often judged by higher-ups based on the time it took to complete previous work. This reinforces the cycle of overwork/inappropriate time.
- Many PGRs feel they have no secondary system to report to if they feel overworked by their supervisor.
- Some PhDs (e.g. Engineering) do not get holiday, leading to their overwork and, in some cases, inability to see family.
- Applying for research funding takes valuable time that is often not accounted for.
- Unforeseen obstacles in research can lead to rushing work to meet deadlines.
- Decreases research quality

Suggestions for Change

- The institution/schools should more holistically evaluate workloads, ideally by more thoroughly consulting those who are assigned said work (e.g. technicians, lecturers).
- When more work is needed, those in teaching positions should be supported by **teaching assistants**.
- Research leave for lecturers should be better prioritised and policy should be consistent across schools.
- Implement **block-teaching** when possible.
- Staff should be required to establish time off in 6-month progression forms.
- The University should properly reward and support realistic workloads by asking academics how much time their work should take and why.
- Require schools to be accountable for institutional policy/guidelines via reviews and/or progress monitoring
- Make sure meetings are necessary. Meetings only for sharing information should be emails.
- Include time for grant applications into contracted workload
- Research leaders should be transparent about taking leave/work-life balance and should encourage others to maintain a healthy work/life balance.
- Flexible research funding and timeframes to account for unforeseen obstacles

Current Good Practice

- Minimal emails and meetings on Fridays
- The university's COVID response regarding stress was viewed as very positive and normalised discussing/prioritising mental health.
 - It also helped researchers feel less guilty about taking leave.
- Heads of school and unit directors advertising taking leave
 - Especially without answering emails, doing work, etc. while on leave

Career Progression (7/11 Sessions)

- Short-term contracts were repeatedly cited as a source of extreme anxiety for researchers due to their lack of job security.
 - The stress of having to continually chase short-term contracts decreases research quality due to stress.
 - Those with caring responsibilities are particularly disadvantaged by continual short-term contracts, as they are unable to move often in pursuit of employment.
 - Short-term contracts are particularly destructive to those with visas, as their visa status depends on near-constant employment.
- Researchers not wanting to pursue a research career in academia feel unsupported and struggle to find guidance.
- Researchers under temporary contracts are often ineligible for grants.
- Grants are particularly scarce in arts and humanities, limiting opportunities for career growth.

- Many grants are either for ECRs or late-career researchers, excluding mid-career researchers.
- Researchers are not evaluated on the quality of their specific contribution to a project.
- The number, size, and type of funding opportunities is reactive rather than proactive.
- Indicators for research success tend to be monetary rather than qualitative.
- Those in teaching roles do not have the time to apply for the volume of grants expected of/needed by them.
- **Promotions criteria** are opaque, making it difficult for staff to understand what steps they can take to work toward promotion.

Suggestions for Change

- Offer more **Alumni fellowships**
- Provide clear, outlined career paths for post-docs, including those not wanting to pursue a career in academia.
- Introduce the **CRedit Taxonomy**.
- Introduce more internships, courses, and workshops that are accessible to PGRs.
- Provide clear, checklist-style promotions criteria for staff
- Formal shadowing, secondment, and internship schemes for staff to further their development.
 - It was acknowledged that this could increase workload for other members of staff, and it was suggested that these could be incorporated into the working day as to not leave departments short staffed.
 - These programs could even be used advantageously to reduce workload in over-stressed sectors.

Current Good Practice

- The School of Biological Sciences has an industry internship program.
- The university currently allocates 10 days a year for ECRs to participate in career development.
- NSF grant applications
- Pump-priming funds for interdisciplinary research

Equality, Diversity, Transparency & Inclusion (6/11 Sessions)

- The **reporting system** for misconduct was repeatedly described as being unorganised, non-transparent, inaccessible, and untrustworthy. Researchers felt that their reports would not be taken seriously and/or treated with sensitivity.
 - The reporting system for PGRs specifically was difficult to find for researchers.
 - ECRs and PGRs rely on references from managers, supervisors, and PIs, making them unwilling to report misconduct or raise concerns.
- The **researcher-supervisor** relationship was identified as having the potential to be damaging due to an unbalanced power structure where supervisors hold too much power over their researchers.
 - Poor communication between supervisors and researchers leads to stress for the researcher.

- Frustration was expressed on the perception that efforts to target discrimination are focused on individuals rather than at the systemic nature of discrimination.
- Generally, those with protected characteristics (specifically those with disabilities and/or people of colour) have felt dissuaded from pursuing a career in research due to discrimination they have experienced across institutions.
- Ethnic-minority researchers and foreign/immigrant researchers are pressured/expected/need to perform better than white researchers to advance according to cultural pressures.
- Women are disproportionately assigned to/expected to take on supportive roles.
- Career breaks are more frequent in women than in men due to parenting responsibilities, but the expectations universities' have of these groups does not reflect this.
 - The careers of those with caring responsibilities in general are negatively impacted by career breaks.
- **Research leaders** and other more senior members of staff "getting away with" discrimination/bullying perpetuates it as a cultural norm and normalises it within the research community
 - This also dissuades members of staff from reporting this behaviour, as it is seen as "just the way it is".
- The same avenues which allow for racism/sexism also allow general bullying to continue unaddressed.
 - **Annual reviews** do not feel like a safe space to report misconduct as they are conducted with the researcher's supervisor in some schools.

Suggestions for Change

- Provide the space and tools for groups to form their own cohorts so they can collectively identify issues and propose effective strategies for change.
- Implement a "**career clock**" when assessing experience that records the total time spent in practice, rather than time since graduation, last published, etc.
- Working outside of normal working hours should only be required when necessary and should be regarded to a greater degree than it currently is.
- Monthly/bi-monthly conversations/check-ins between researchers **and personal advisors**
- Conduct annual reviews with a secondary contact
- Make avenues for reporting visible (e.g., easily found online, included as part of new hire/introduction training) and transparent (e.g., disclose the status of a report to the reporter, make the stages a report can reach available for members of staff, update the reporter if any steps are taken as a result of the report).
- Provide visible formal and informal routes for researchers to discuss their concerns and seek guidance, particularly related to their mental health.

Communication (5/11 Sessions)

- Researchers and staff do not feel that their group/school/department has a "**shared vision**".
- Very little inter-disciplinary dialogue, negatively impacting quality and speed of work.
- Researchers feel isolated from others.

- Cross-discipline PGRs feel particularly under supported and represented.
- Campus architecture does not provide informal meeting spaces, particularly the Zoology building and Foresterhill.
- Physical space for staff and PGRs to collaborate, socialise, and generally communicate was said to be lacking. Many buildings have isolated offices and cramped communal areas.
- Little sense of what “everyone else is doing”.
- Feedback is difficult to give and receive.
- Support staff/technicians do not feel incorporated into research communication frameworks.
 - Support staff/technicians felt that academics did not have a good understanding of their roles, responsibilities, resources, and expertise(s).

Suggestions for Change

- Power should be shared across levels of the institution, as this leads to shared/collaborative information/input.
- The power of school admin should be limited so that schools must report back to the University at large.
- Feedback mechanisms should be advertised and easily accessible.
- Meetings should be **bottom-up** and not exclusively top-down as they are now.
- Open meetings within school where input from across employment levels is considered and impactful
- Working groups should agree upon and informally monitor progress on goals.
- Lunch/tea areas where people can informally meet and chat should be a part of campus design.
 - Having a booking system for these spaces was said to be too formal and therefore defeat the purpose.
- Schools should be required to communicate as part of the organisational structure.
 - E.g., more frequent inter-school collaboration spaces, policies
- Support staff/technicians should be consulted more on research, particularly when concerning new researcher appointments (due to lab space) and research timelines.

Appendix C: Research Culture Task & Finish group recommendations around assessment for promotion

The criteria used to assess staff for promotion allow an institution to set out clearly its expectations and to signal the activities which are valued. Assessment provides an important tool by which universities can influence a change in priorities of researchers if it wishes to do so. As part of the Research Culture Task & Finish group, and considering the forthcoming review of promotion procedures commencing November 2021, we have brought together suggestions for consideration by the review committee.

Currently for staff who are expected to conduct research as part of their duties (those on research or teaching & research contracts), criteria for promotion are focussed mainly around involvement in obtaining external funding for research activities, knowledge exchange and student recruitment, and disseminating high-quality research nationally and internationally by means of publications, conference presentations and/or exhibitions. There is some recognition of activities related to “the development of the skills and knowledge of others in the work team” and “teamwork and team leadership when working in both internal and external teams”.

The UKRI has recently trialled a new format of Curriculum Vitae (called a Narrative CV) based on the Royal Society Resumé for Researchers. It includes sections on funding awarded for research activities and how the applicant has

- contributed to the flow of new ideas, hypotheses, tools or knowledge (which can include selected research outputs),
- contributed to research teams and/or the development of others and
- contributed to the wider research and innovation community (including contribution to “open research”).
- exploited their research

The use of this format of CV allows researchers to highlight what they consider to be their highest quality research outputs and their role in such outputs. A system for describing roles such as the CRediT taxonomy) could be used. Some universities have operationalised aspect of this in an assessment of “collegiality”. The adoption of wider metrics (“Alt” metrics) and tools such as ORCID to connect identities to outputs supports the measurement of wider dissemination and societal impact.

One challenge of this new format is of evidencing the statements made, so consideration should be given to how researchers could do this. For some activities there may be documentation available but for others, options such as 360° Appraisal could be made available for those who wish. There would however need to be investigation of how such a tool could be made available “at scale”. Further it is recognised that some activities (such as contributions to teams) may be more relevant to the ways of working in some disciplines than others.

Including documentation and evaluation of the above domains would allow candidates to report how they have supported the career development of those they manage/have managed and how, for example, they support professional development in relation to The Concordat.

Recommendations:

20. *Our main recommendation is that **a wider set of research activities is recognised in the promotion procedures** and specifically a decreased importance given to volume of research published.*
21. *We recommend **consideration be given to ways the University can reward staff for achievements, in addition to research funding and high-quality outputs**, giving specific consideration to aspects of the “narrative CV”, and ways in which such contributions could be relevant to all disciplines, and evidenced.*

A specific issue raised in discussions related to the challenges for postdoctoral researchers being promoted from Grade 6 to 7. Their remit often doesn't allow for the kind of experience they require to evidence appropriate development (for example in teaching, independent research), nor for mentorship beyond the university. There is also no change in job title between Grades 6 and 7 for Research Fellows. We recommend consideration around clear promotion pathways for this group of researchers supported by the necessary development opportunities within the university. The Concordat invites us to think about these issues and specifically includes the expectation of the provision of 10 days/annum protected development time for all research focussed staff.

Recommendation:

22. *We recommend that **promotion pathways for postdoctoral researchers be revised**, ensuring appropriate job titles, mentorship, and development opportunities are available to them.*